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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ALSACE-LORRAINE AND "ECONOMIC IMPERIALISM"

SIR,—In the November number of *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* was printed an article entitled "The Problem of Alsace-Lorraine," by Mr. Sydney Brooks. Although a very scholarly presentation of a much mooted subject, presenting economic arguments infrequently heard, yet the conclusions and the motives which inspire its writing are greatly to be deplored.

Mr. Brooks's argument is substantially this: Give back Alsace-Lorraine to France largely because it contains the richest iron field in Europe. Deprive Germany of this great resource, for she will then be unable to rebuild a militarism which will again menace the world's peace; and which will, although Mr. Brooks very wisely minimizes its significance, also destroy Germany's trade and commercial prosperity. Further than this, German coal must be kept out of the iron fields of Alsace-Lorraine to prevent the securing of these products through the medium of exchange. And to counteract this possibility, England must supply France with the necessary coke to operate these fields; while he implies that Germany must be absolutely excluded by a tariff wall from any such trade whatever.

This argument, thoroughly sound in its conclusion, provided its premises are just, is a very fine re-enunciation of that economic imperialism which has, in part at least, brought about not only the present war, but all the great wars of modern history. An economic imperialism caused the scramble for concessions in China in 1898 and 1899, partly check-mated by Secretary Hay's two notes proclaiming the policy of the Open Door; brought about the clash between Russia and Japan in the Orient in 1904; and apparently moved Japan in the present war to occupy Tsingtau and to enforce upon China her famous Twenty-one Demands. The same motives caused France to quarrel with Germany at Algeciras and Agadir over the economic penetration of Morocco. It has been the desire of Germany and Russia to mutually exclude each other from the markets of the Balkans which culminated in the murder at Serajevo. It has been the *Drang nach Osten* which led to the Teutonic visualization of a *Mitteleuropa* extending from the Baltic to the Persian Gulf; which led to an unholy alliance with the Turk, and attempted the construction of the Bagdad railroad: all in a scramble for protected markets, trade concessions, and economic monopolies.

Now Germany has committed all the crimes known to God and man in the present war; and this in itself is sufficient justification for America's entrance into it. But Mr. Brooks would extend the repre-

lensible principles of the past into the settlements of the future. He would deprive a state of her natural rights to trade and development for fear that she will again use any such advantages for imperialistic purposes. While, on the contrary, he would give to a neighboring nation, France, the same privileges which he would deny Germany on the ground that the former is, by some unknown logic, more able to trustworthily exercise them than the latter. In other words, he would institute a trade war; he would prolongate the present struggle for blood into one for subsistence. Such principles were bespoken by the Allies' Economic Conference at Paris in the summer of 1916; and they brought forth a well-deserved condemnation not only from the general world of public opinion, but from President Wilson himself in his answer to the Pope's peace proposal of last August.

Every nation has a right to develop its resources, extend its trade, and provide for the welfare of its people so long as it does it legitimately. German philosophers and rulers have led their people to believe that this was impossible because of the "encircling policy" of the enemies about them. Hence they won a common assent to the present war. The only way to change this attitude of the German masses is to give them a normal, legitimate opportunity for trade and colonial expansion. This cannot be done by the "establishment of selfish and exclusive leagues" or by the erection of tariff walls such as Mr. Brooks suggests for Alsace-Lorraine. If Mr. Brooks would destroy German military power by depriving her of Alsatian iron, he might *a fortiori* advocate the partition of the German Empire itself, a *reductio ad absurdum* to which even Mr. Brooks is not likely to accede.

The United States has demanded that any peace Germany enters into must be guaranteed. This can be done by the democratization of the German Government, the limitation of all armaments, Allied and Teutonic, and the establishment of a League to Enforce Peace. Along with these methods might be added another: that of freedom of trade, the destruction of protected markets, which have proven the cause of so much illicit rivalry and sinister suspicions.

Now I am no Democrat. If the world is to be governed on the same basis as it has been in the past, protection is a logical necessity to the independence of nations desiring military power. But if a new era of international good-will is to be ushered in, it must be on a new economic basis which will include the right of reciprocal trading between nations, without any artificial restriction.

No one can honestly desire the retention of Alsace-Lorraine by Germany. Many, however, are dubious of France's right to these provinces. Louis XIV, in the minds of many, was just as wrong in wrenching them from Germany as was Bismarck in retaking them in 1870. Whatever form the settlement may take, Germany is entitled, by all canons of right and expediency, to exchange her coal and coke for the iron and steel of these two provinces. In fact, she has just as much right to trade with them as she will have to send her manufactures to America after the war is over. If Germany is democratized, as she inevitably will be, and if armaments are universally limited, the nations of the world have no right to fear that the new Germany will prostitute her trade in such products for dynastic lusts.

The entrance of America into the war brings with it the optimistic hope that she will be able to inculcate into the warring Powers new principles of internationalism which will prevent rather than accentuate the insensate ambitions of the past.

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RAYMOND L. BUELL.

VIEWING DR. FLEXNER WITH ALARM

Sir,—It is not without painful and justifiable alarm that we read of Dr. Abraham Flexner's plan to open a modern school at Teachers' College of Columbia University, the curriculum of which will discard "uncongenial and obsolete classics" "in favor of those studies for which an affirmative case may be made out."

That such a man as Dr. Flexner would consider offering an anti-cultural curriculum is incredible; that he sets at naught those subjects which have through the ages contributed to the softening of barbaric tendencies is appalling; that he has the prestige of a great university is almost criminal. (Were it not a platitude, we would say that Germany is a fair example of the Utilitarian Idea raised to the tenth power.)

If Dr. Flexner's efforts could be limited to a private clientele which, in pitiable ignorance of the higher purposes of education, was willing to accept a base metal for gold, his influence would not be a national menace. Certainly the deficiencies of our present school system are not due to a preponderance of cultural studies that is "damaging good taste," as he would have us believe, but rather to the lamentable groping with "methods."

Dr. Flexner's idea is not new; it has been followed, probably not in theory, for many years, in a large section of this country, with the resultant crudeness of society delighting in cheap amusements, inflaming literature, and a loathing of dignified repose at all times. In your December 1916 issue a most convincing article by Margaret Sherwood anent the question of culture sounded a note of warning which evidently was not sufficiently loud.

Perhaps you Easterners chuckled at Dr. Flexner's daring, and straightaway forgot him, but to us who send to Columbia hundreds of teachers who regard as gospel all they hear, it is not a movement to be ignored.

Can't you publish something that will awaken a widespread revolt against such fallacies?

ORANGE, TEX.

MARY S. HEMSON.

OUR SOLDIERS "WITHOUT A COUNTRY"

SIR,—This country contains a special group of citizens numbering some ten or twelve millions. They are, almost without exception, native-born. A large proportion of them have a longer American pedigree than either Colonel Roosevelt or President Wilson. Fifty thousand of their fathers and grandfathers fought as volunteers in the United States Army between 1861 and 1865. Many of their youths today are in the army. Many more are eager to enter it. In General Carter's article, printed in your November issue, he gives a list of the number of the workers in a